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Volume 138, Number 34

Thursday, January 24, 2019

Barnhart, Nelson announce 'design exercise' for dorms

Exercise reqs. ban mutual selection, mandate first-year squatting rights

By Jessica Shi
NEWS EDITOR

Administrators and student leaders are continuing to move forward with a process to reexamine and potentially alter the room assignment and move-in procedures of undergraduate dormitories, including through a recently announced "design exercise" with requirements that are significantly incompatible with the current systems many dorms have in place.

The details of the design exercise, initially sent to student leaders Jan. 12 by Chancellor Cynthia Barnhart PhD '88 and Vice President and Dean for Student Life Suzy Nelson, were forwarded by several dorm presidents to their residents last week.

"When finding a place to live in our residence halls, at any point during a student's time on campus, we do not want students to experience rejection because they were judged and ultimately not selected by other students," the email from Barnhart and Nelson read.

"We also do not want students to experience the negative outcomes that can accompany forced moves, such as unnecessary stress, lack of agency, and not feeling welcomed in their summer-assigned community," the email continued.

These principles serve as the basis for two requirements, which all submissions must satisfy: upper-level students cannot preference or select which new students live in their community (thus banning "mutual selection"); and new students cannot be forced to move out of the room assigned to them over the summer (thus allowing "squatting").

Four of the undergraduate dorms currently use some variant of mutual selection: Burton Conner, East Campus, MacGregor House, and New House. The remaining six dorms implement either a randomized or preference-based lottery.

Only Maseeh Hall and McCormick Hall have guaranteed squatting for first-year students, which also makes them the only dorms to already fulfill both requirements.

"This is truly a design exercise," Nelson said in an interview with *The Tech* Tuesday.

"We're not trying to impose a solution," Barnhart said in the same interview. The purpose of specifying the requirements is to step back from current discussions and produce ideas that can be compared with the status quo.

"Having that contrast, perhaps we'll see a pathway for improvement, [or] perhaps we'll see, oh, that causes problems A, B, C, D," Barnhart explained.

Barnhart and Nelson will hold a student workshop March 2 and conduct individual meetings with dorm leaders to discuss the benefits and costs of the proposed solutions.

"I believe that if students feel

Design, Page 2

KEVIN LY—THE TECH

Boston experiences its first snow of the year Jan. 19 to the delight of MIT students across campus. Pictured above is the sculpture 'Aesop's Fables II' at North Court.

Commencement may be moved a week earlier starting 2020

Tweaks could be made to IAP length, finals schedule

By Billy Woltz
STAFF REPORTER

The Office of the Vice Chancellor is in the process of trying to move Commencement one week earlier starting in 2020, Vice Chancellor Ian Waitz said in an interview with *The Tech*.

To do this, seven days from elsewhere in the academic calendar need to be shifted. There are three proposed ways to do so, all of which involve making a few small changes that add up to seven days.

Currently, the spring semester ends in the following way: the last day of classes falls on a Thursday, followed by a Friday and a weekend known as "reading days," and then five days of final exams. After finals, there are almost two weeks of administrative days before the hooding and commencement ceremonies.

All three of the proposed calendar changes involve cutting four of the administrative days. They differ in how they make up the remaining three days.

The first proposal would replace the final class day of IAP with spring registration day. The finals period would be shortened from five days to four, and it would straddle the weekend currently devoted to part of the reading period. An additional reading day would be added to allow students to prepare for the earlier finals. To make up the final day needed, the grading period given to professors after finals would also be shortened by one day.

The second option would keep the current length of IAP, but spring registration would be held on the final Friday of IAP. Class would be held the Tuesday after Patriot's Day, and the remaining changes would be identical to the first proposal.

The final proposal would also hold spring registration on the final day of IAP, but it would keep the

Commencement, Page 3

Approx. half of first-year students took one fewer fall GIR than usual

Class of 2023 proposal currently being drafted, VC Waitz says

By Billy Woltz
STAFF REPORTER

Approximately half of first-year students took one fewer General Institute Requirement course than usual last fall after an experiment conducted by the Office of the Vice Chancellor allowed first years to take up to three additional science, mathematics, or engineering GIRs on Pass or No Record at any time after their first semester.

The goal of the experiment is to increase first years' flexibility to explore different majors before they have to declare one. By allowing students to delay taking GIRs, the administration hoped to encourage students to take more non-GIR classes earlier in their college career.

Most first years delayed taking the biology or chemistry GIRs, Vice Chancellor Ian Waitz told *The Tech* in an interview.

To further encourage major exploration, the OVC has also ar-

First Year, Page 3

IN SHORT

Spring registration opens for all students Jan. 28.

Undergraduate registration for third quarter physical education classes opens Jan. 30 at 8 a.m.

Registration Day for spring term is Feb. 4.

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KEVIN LY—THE TECH

Every third Thursday of the month, MIT Sustainability hosts the "Choose to Reuse" event in an effort to minimize our carbon footprint. All are welcome to donate their belongings in the morning, which others can then claim later in the day.

GOODBYE, NATE NICKERSON

MIT's vice president for communications is leaving for Yale.
NEWS, p. 3

PUZZLES GALORE

An assortment of entertaining puzzles to suit your appetite can be found inside.
FUN, p. 5

AVOIDING TEMPTATION

How far are you willing to go for the sake of reality? **ARTS, p. 4**

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Twenty-five percent of undergrads describe room assignment process as 'stressful,' survey says

Design, from Page 1

that the best they could do under these constraints is inferior to what they could do if they were to change their process in some other way, they will be extremely motivated to tell us about what they could do in that other way," Barnhart said.

While Barnhart and Nelson could not specify the expected outcome of the discussions, Nelson explained that they hoped to reach "some kind of consensus" on what would work and continue under a "paced" rather than rushed timeline.

The design exercise is one piece of a much larger and longer discussion about room assignment and move-in practices.

"What's motivating us is the knowledge that some of our students — a minority — have experiences during move-in and room assignment that are not positive," Barnhart said.

"Individual students have come to us as well as to house student leaders to share their experiences with rejection, isolation, and stress; heads of house have told us that they have concerns about aspects of the room assignment and move-in process; and families have shared concerns about the added stress MIT's rooming process presents their students," Barnhart added in a follow-up email to *The Tech*.

Barnhart also cited a number of other factors in her email, including a 1999 report by former Chancellor Lawrence Bacow '72 titled "The Design of the New Residence System," reports from Division of Student Life visiting committees, and recent student survey results.

Twenty-five percent of undergraduate students described their dorm's room assignment process as "stressful" on the 2017 Quality of Life survey, and more than 40 percent of students responding to an open-ended question on the 2018 Orientation survey "provided a negative comment on their experience when they arrived at their residence hall," Barnhart wrote.

Barnhart and Nelson said at several points during the interview that the student leaders who have been working closely with them throughout the fall term understand the issues and thus "get it," as Barnhart put it, whereas other residents are comparatively unaware of the scope and details of the discussions.

"Our challenge as always is to get out the word ... on what our philosophy and strategy is," Barnhart acknowledged. "Students worry about our intentions."

Additional next steps outlined in Barnhart and Nelson's email to dorm presidents included first-year student focus group sessions, where randomly selected students will be invited to discuss their experiences, and a faculty panel Feb. 7.

Currently confirmed panelists, according to Barnhart, are Susan Silbey, chair of the faculty; Ray Reagans, a behavioral and policy sciences professor; Parag Pathak, a market design and economics professor; and John Essigmann PhD '76, Simmons's Head of House and an environmental health sciences professor.

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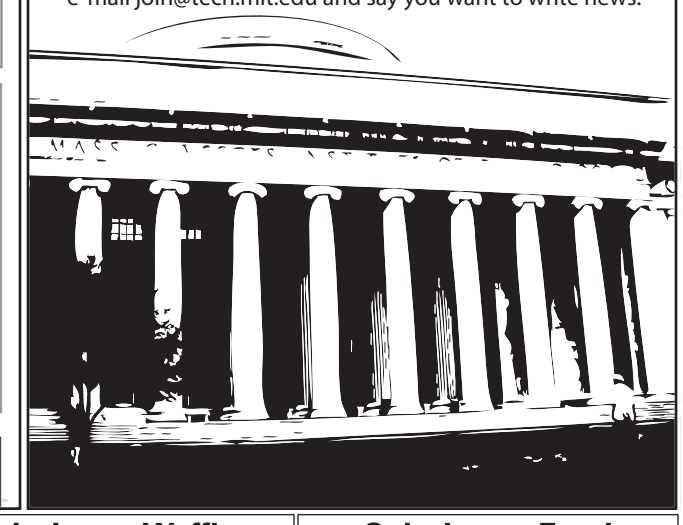

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Solution to Pancake

from page 5

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2	8	7	9	1	6	5	3	4
1	4	3	8	5	7	9	2	6
6	9	5	3	4	2	1	7	8

Solution to Waffle

from page 5

4	5	1	6	3	2
5	6	2	1	4	3
3	4	6	5	2	1
6	1	3	2	5	4
1	2	4	3	6	5
2	3	5	4	1	6

Solution to Food

from page 5

■	T	I	C	■	U	M	P	S	■	E	R	A	S	E
S	O	D	A	■	M	E	A	L	■	X	E	R	O	X
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No statistically significant change in student preparedness to choose major

First Year, from Page 1

ranged for a variety of "academic exploration subjects" to be offered in the upcoming spring semester. They are mostly 1–3 unit classes in which students can hear about current, exciting work being done in the field from experts and alumni.

The subjects to be offered include 5.001 (Frontiers in Molecular and Materials Science), 12.00 (Frontiers and Careers in Earth, Planets, Climate, and Life), and 21G.012 (Exploring Globalization through Chinese Food).

The experiment may have also been partly responsible for the Class of 2022's better academic performance this past fall. According to grade data collected by the OVC, the average GPA of first-semester freshman slightly rose, and the number of fifth week flags dropped, Waitz said.

The OVC is unable to further quantify how much these metrics changed because they do not publically release GPA-related data, according to Michael Rutter, senior advisor for communications in the OVC, in an email to *The Tech*.

However, student preparedness to choose a major did not see statistically significant change based on survey and interview data the OVC collected from the classes of 2021 and 2022, Waitz said.

According to Waitz, pre-health students, which make up about 10 percent of the freshman class, were advised not to change their P/NR plans because it was not clear how medical schools would respond. Medical schools already tend to ask students to release their hidden grades, and they may be skeptical of applicants who have more hidden grades.

It is too early to tell how many first years will take a GIR on P/NR this spring, Rutter wrote.

The OVC is just beginning the proposal for any policy changes for the class of 2023, but the policy will be along the lines of increasing exploration, Waitz said. The proposal will be ready early next month, when it will be submitted to the Committee on the Undergraduate Program.

Vice President for Communications Nate Nickerson to leave for Yale after nearly 15 years at MIT

Nate Nickerson, vice president for communications, will leave for Yale University after nearly 15 years at MIT. Nickerson will lead Yale's Office of Public Affairs and Communications as the vice president for communications starting March 1.

Since his appointment in February 2015, Nickerson established the Office of Communications and created MIT News, which is now one of the most-read university websites in the world, according to Kirk Kolenbrander, MIT's vice president, in an email announcing Nickerson's departure.

Nickerson joined MIT in 2004 as deputy editor of *Technology Review*, a magazine and website owned by MIT. He was named editorial director of the News Office in 2009, director of communications in 2010, and associate vice president for communications in 2012.

Nickerson will be at MIT until Feb. 15, according to Kolenbrander.

"I have loved all of my nearly 15 years at MIT," Nickerson wrote in an email to *The Tech*. "It's a very hard place to leave — but I am sure that it will in some meaningful way come with me: MIT changes all of us profoundly, just as it changes the world."

While MIT works on developing a long-term plan for future management of communications, the Office of Communications will continue to report to Kolenbrander.

— *Jenny Gao*

CORRECTIONS

An article in last week's issue about the "Room of Quiet" misstated the first name of MIT's Catholic chaplain. He is Daniel, not David.

OVC plans to bring proposal to faculty in late March

Commencement, from Page 1

four-day-long Patriot's Day weekend as is. Instead, it would reduce the finals period by one day without adding a reading day back by holding a day of finals on Saturday. In this option, the end of the semester would consist of a sequence of two reading days, finals on Saturday, another reading day on Sunday, and then three more days of finals. The grading period would also be reduced by one day.

For any changes to affect the Class of 2020, they must be approved this spring. In late March, the OVC plans to bring a proposal to the faculty, and vote on it at a faculty meeting in April.

The OVC proposed the change primarily for three reasons, Waitz said. First, students in rental units might have to pay an additional month's rent to stay as late as they do for Commencement.

Second, keeping the dorms occupied later is logistically challenging. Dorm upkeep, such as painting and other maintenance, must be done during the summer. The problem is exacerbated by the need to house those participating in MIT's various summer programs.

Finally, faculty typically do a lot of research-related travel, such as for conferences, in the first week of June. This is usually not a problem, because most institutions have their commencements in May. For MIT faculty members to attend Commencement, however, they must modify their travel plans accordingly.

The OVC released an anonymous survey, which can be found on its website, to collect feedback on the schedule changes.

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Solution to Bacon

from page 6

8	9	1	3	2	4	6	7	5
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Solution to Sausage

from page 7

6	5	3	2	4	1
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3	2	6	5	1	4
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Solution to Beasts

from page 7

R	A	F	T	■	C	L	A	N	■	A	S	C	O	T
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Solution to Croissant

from page 7

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MOVIE REVIEW

When reality strikes back

Serenity brings a new perspective to the old genre thriller

GRAHAM BARTHOLOMEW/AVIRON PICTURES

Karen (Anne Hathaway) brings turbulent tides to Baker Dill (Matthew McConaughey) as his past resurfaces in *Serenity*.

By Nathan Liang
ASSOCIATE ARTS EDITOR

Serenity focuses on Baker Dill (Matthew McConaughey), captain of the fishing boat Serenity. At the start of this tale, his luck is running out. The fish aren't coming, and he's not raking in any income. However, he does have a loving woman by his side and a loyal first mate. All in all, it's a simple life. Then, his ex-wife Karen (Anne Hathaway) steps into the picture — blonde, beautiful, and dangerously tempting. She approaches Dill with a very specific request: kill her husband (Jason Clarke) so that she and their son can be freed from his abusive reign.

At first glance, the premise of the film seems like that of any other thriller. The story itself also doesn't feel particularly extraordinary throughout the first half of the film. Karen is desperate for Dill to release her from her abusive relationship. Their son, Patrick (Rafael Sayegh), locks himself in his room, eyes glued to his computer screen.

During the first half of the film, there are multiple nebulous concepts that are constantly addressed by the inhabitants of Plymouth island: luck, morality, right and wrong. The way these ideas are thrown about feels arbitrary. Some inhabitants of the island criticize Dill's obsession with catching tuna. "You just gotta catch the fish that's in your head" is a common phrase that comes up. The barkeep of the island and Duke (Djimon Hounsou), Dill's first mate, constantly badger Dill about his loss of luck and how he should find ways to remedy his bout of unluckiness. At first, it's uncertain why these things matter. Is the island generally this superstitious? Why does it feel like everyone's trying to treat the problems of this one ordinary man?

Then Karen shows up with her own problems, and the confusion starts mounting from this point onward. It was hard to continue watching, as it felt like Knight kept adding more and more storylines that seemed to lead nowhere. Karen wants Dill to kill her husband. She wants him to do it to protect their son, but also so she and Dill can rekindle their former love? But where did Dill's second wife go in all of this? Why does a black cat keep showing up out of nowhere, aside from signaling an omen of bad luck? Why does everyone suddenly seem omniscient about Karen and Dill's situation, despite all circumstances pointing to the fact that they shouldn't know anything to begin with? Why is everyone so fixated on the idea of Dill catching tuna?

All of these questions mount on the viewer, building an uncomfortable tension that only frustrates. What makes it worse is the almost comical cinematography. Notably, in the scene when Karen is introduced, the camera pans to her and then frantically revolves around her like a bee. The effect in that one scene was enough to take me aback and question why I was in that theater, watching this film. It was enough to make me skeptical of what I was watching.

Then the climax of the movie comes with answers. Suddenly, everything makes sense, but it definitely takes time to come around to the idea Knight tries to present to his viewers. Fortunately, the film allows viewers to adjust because Dill must always come to terms with the news of his reality. This is when McConaughey particularly shows off his prowess as an excellent actor. From his anger and frustration to his skepticism to his acceptance of the whole situation, the transition of ideas is smooth for both his character and the viewer. The big "ah-ha" moment explodes in our faces but leaves behind a clean slate upon which we can redraw our understanding of the situation.

I do think there is a certain genius in what Knight does. He takes the classic concept of a thriller murder story and puts a modern twist on it. However, the familiarity of the concept did easily lend itself to clichés, which is another thing the film suffers from. From Anne Hathaway's breathy-voiced fashion beauty to Jason Clarke's drunken buffoon of an abusive husband, it wasn't hard to ultimately predict the outcome of the overall story.

The final verdict? Ultimately, the movie was a satisfying watch, despite the rocky first act. Fans of Matthew McConaughey or the thriller genre alike will not be disappointed by *Serenity*.

★★★☆☆

Serenity

Directed by Steven Knight

Screenplay by Steven Knight

Starring Matthew McConaughey, Anne Hathaway, Djimon Hounsou, Jason Clarke, Jeremy Strong

Rated R, Now Playing

Pancake

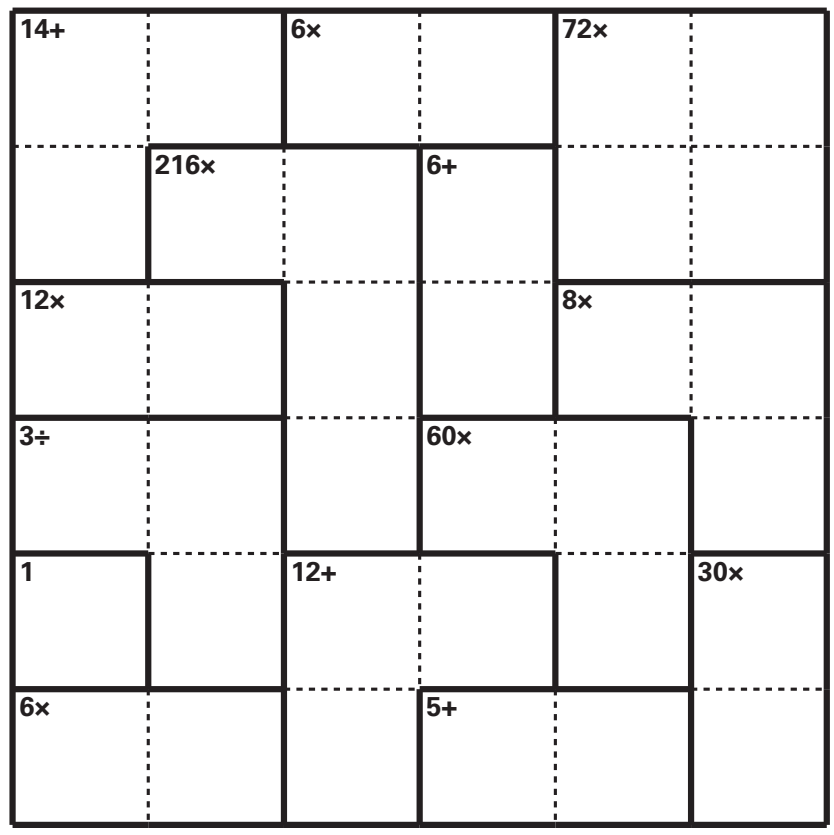
Solution, page 2

8	3			6				5
5			4	2		6	8	
	6	8		9			5	
9		1		7		8		3
	5			3		2	1	
	4	3		5	7			6
6				4			7	8

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column, row, and 3 by 3 grid contains exactly one of each of the digits 1 through 9.

Waffle

Solution, page 2



Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column and row contains exactly one of each of the numbers 1–6. Follow the mathematical operations for each box.

Food Processing by Sandy Fein

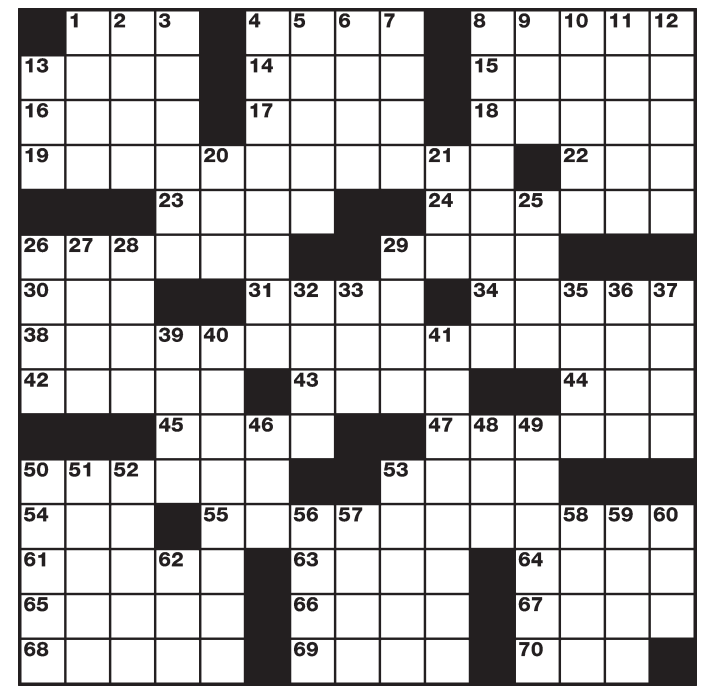
Solution, page 2

ACROSS

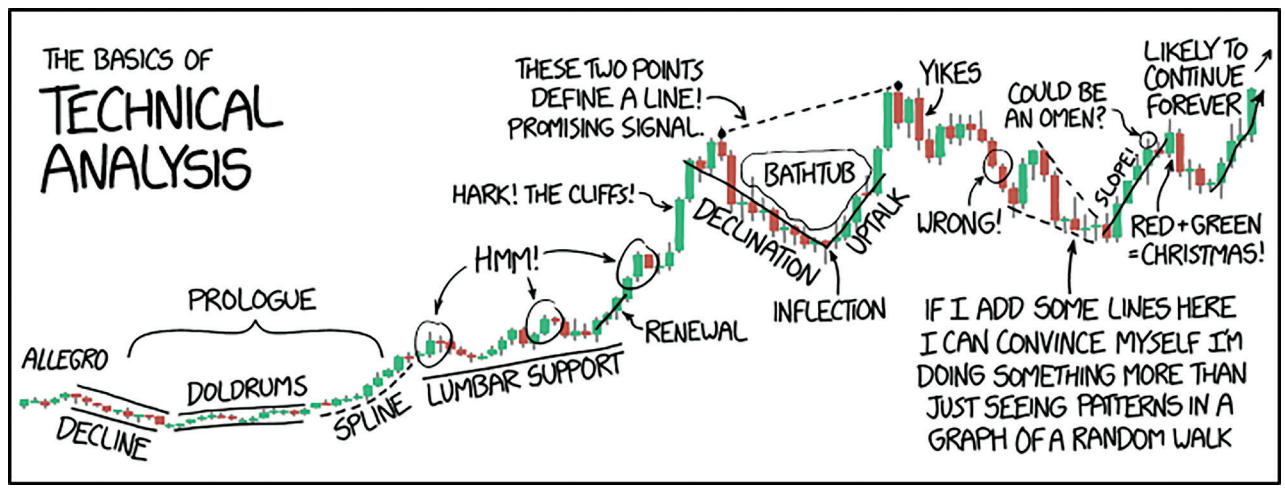
1 __-tac-toe
4 Baseball officials, for short
8 Remove pencil marks
13 Cola or ginger ale
14 Breakfast or dinner
15 __ copy (photocopy)
16 Last word of a prayer
17 Soft French cheese
18 Banish
19 Device that chops beef for hamburger
22 1/60 of a min.
23 Main ingredient in borscht
24 Gain entry to
26 In addition
29 Group of three
30 Meadow
31 Lion's den
34 Intelligent
38 Device that removes skin from potatoes
42 Boxing match venue
43 Nile queen, for short
44 "Give __ break!"
45 Dunks chips into salsa
47 Go __ (date only one person)
50 Major annoyance
53 Hollywood headliner
54 Intense anger
55 Device that crushes pungent cloves
61 Actor Henry, Jane or Peter
63 Scarlett O'Hara's home
64 Solo for a soprano
65 Poker player's quitting words
66 ". . . happily __ after"
67 Sharp taste
68 Corporal's superior, for short
69 Hourglass contents
70 Make a request

DOWN

1 "Leave it __!" ("I'll handle it")
2 Creative thought
3 "That's impossible!"
4 Portable rain protection
5 Be deserving of
6 __ in the neck (annoyance)
7 Snow coaster
8 Jog or do push-ups
9 Tyrannosaurus __
10 Crop up
11 Bottoms of shoes
12 Corporate VIPs
13 America's "uncle"
20 Hair goo
21 Serving of corn
25 __ through (perform as hoped)
26 Thomas __ Edison
27 Fortune-teller
28 Employee's pay
29 Elm or maple
32 Fundamentals
33 Not feeling well
35 __ mater (school once attended)
36 Mouthpiece for an oboe
37 Cafeteria food holder
39 Conclusions
40 Follow a car too closely
41 "Picture" mail sent by a tourist
46 Split __ soup
48 Knock softly
49 List of a book's misprints
50 Stereo systems
51 Enticing smell
52 Mexican mister
53 Emergency vehicle sound
56 Itineraries: Abbr.
57 Volcano outflow
58 Historical periods
59 Kitchen basin
60 Droop
62 Used a shovel



[2101] Technical Analysis



"I [suspect] that we are throwing more and more of our resources, including the cream of our youth, into financial activities remote from the production of goods and services, into activities that generate high private rewards disproportionate to their social productivity. I suspect that the immense power of the computer is being harnessed to this 'paper economy', not to do the same transactions more economically but to balloon the quantity and variety of financial exchanges." –James Tobin, July 1984

xkcd
A WEBCOMIC OF ROMANCE, SARCASM, MATH, AND LANGUAGE
by Randall Munroe

FUNFUNFUNF

FUNFUNFUNF

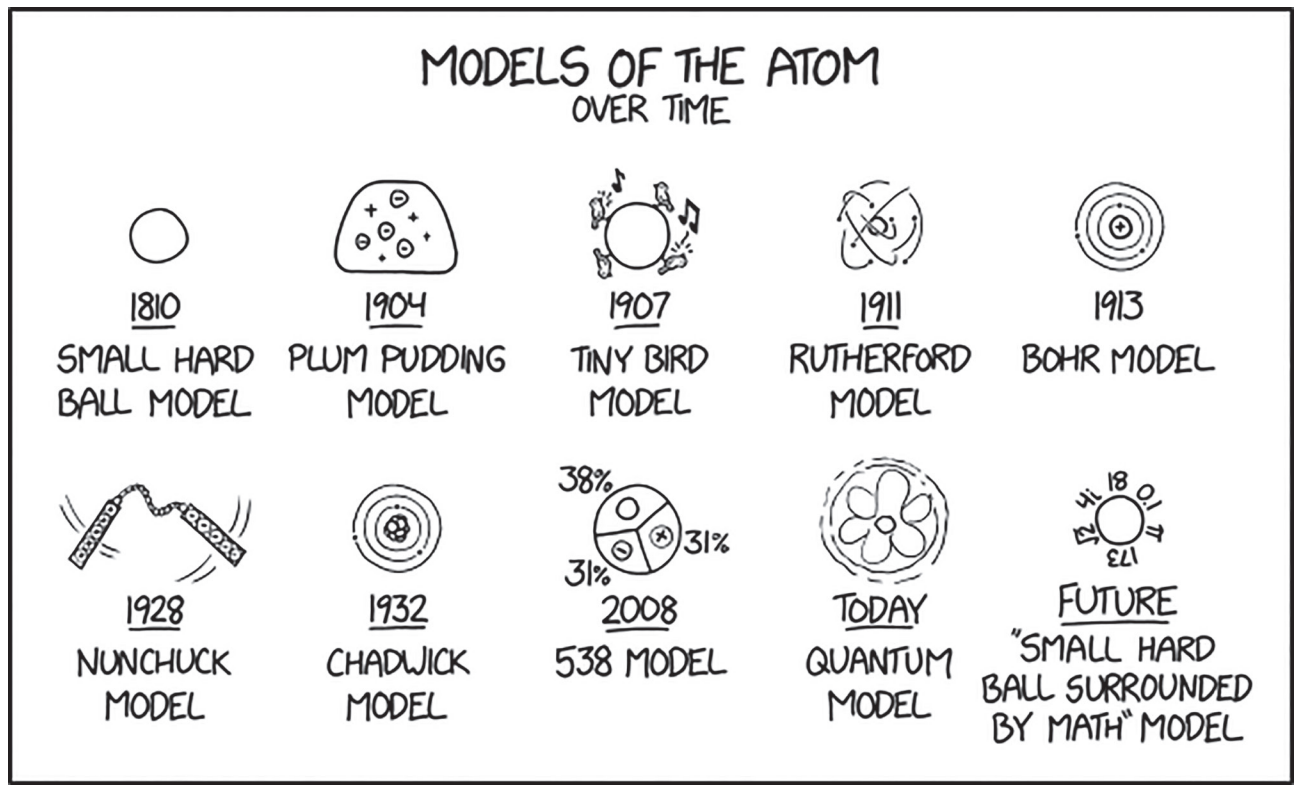
Croissant

Solution, page 3

23+		162×				8+	160×	
	14×			140×				9
	1–	4–			27+			2
72×		192×		6			63×	
	1		252×		8+			2–
	13+			2×		135×		
42×		24+			112×		18×	
	6		5			4×		4
26+							42×	

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column and row contains exactly one of each of the numbers 1–6. Follow the mathematical operations for each box.

[2100] Models of the Atom



xkcd

A WEBCOMIC OF ROMANCE, SARCASM, MATH, AND LANGUAGE

by Randall Munroe

J.J. Thompson won a Nobel Prize for his work in electricity in gases, but was unfairly passed over for his "An atom is plum pudding, and plum pudding is MADE of atoms! Duuuuude." theory.

FUN FUN FUN

Dorm presidents respond to design exercise

Mutual selection processes help build close communities, several presidents say

By Zoe Anderson, Sharon Chao, and Jessica Shi
EDITORS

As the process of reassessing dorms' room assignment and move-in procedures continues, *The Tech* reached out to presidents and other leaders in each of MIT's ten dorms to ask about their current procedures and how potential changes would affect their communities.

An email to student leaders from Chancellor Cynthia Barnhart PhD '88 and Vice President and Dean for Student Life Suzy Nelson sent Jan. 12 detailed, among other next steps, a "design exercise" to solicit ideas for policies that would remove elements of rejection and reduce sources of undue stress for new students.

The design exercise imposes two requirements, which all submissions must satisfy: upper-level students cannot preference or select which new students live in their community (thus banning "mutual selection"); and new students cannot be forced to move out of the room assigned to them over the summer (thus allowing "squatting").

Baker House

After the conclusion of the First Year Residence Exchange, first years in Baker fill out room preference sheets, which allow them to indicate their preferences in categories such as floor, wing, neighbors, room type or size, and roommates, according to the policies written on its website. The Rooming Assignment Committee then "evaluates each application holistically" to make the final placements.

Baker's external president did not respond to *The Tech*'s requests for comment.

Burton Conner

First years are initially assigned temporary rooms. Floor Exploration (FLEX) then occurs on the evening FYRE results are released. During FLEX, first years have two hours to visit each of the nine floors and meet upper-level residents.

Afterwards, the first years rank the floors. Each floor also submits a list of students that they think would be a good fit (thus, Burton Conner practices mutual selection). The rooming chairs use a matching algorithm to "ideally have first years get within their top three or four choices," outgoing BC President Katie Fisher '19 said in a phone interview with *The Tech*.

"The current room assignment process puts a lot of value on the community of each floor," Fisher said. "There's a lot of value in mutual selection because upperclassmen are engaged and feel part of their floor communities."

However, Fisher said that mutual selection "is not absolutely necessary" if a new method enables floors to maintain their communities.

According to Fisher, some BC residents are concerned about how a potential new policy will affect the positive experiences that they've had in the dorm. "They're worried that the new policy will make positive experiences impossible for future first-years," Fisher said.

In an email from Fisher to all BC residents, Fisher wrote, "I have been told that if we truly try to create a new process and compare it to our old process, if it's clear that the old one is better, we may not [need to] make changes."

BC Exec is still in the process of understanding and balancing what the administration and different floors want, Fisher said.

East Campus

East Campus holds its hall rush the day FYRE results are released. For five hours, first years visit all 10 halls, with each hall hosting its own events. At the end of the evening, first years rank their hall preferences.

One representative from each hall gathers with the EC president and vice president to place first years into halls according to a mutual selection process aided by an algorithm that optimizes first-year preferences.

> **Solutions from the design exercise "are going to either be their own best advocates or detractors."**

No hall can select a first year that ranked it ninth or tenth, and no hall can refuse to take a particular first-year except in extreme circumstances and with approval from the Head of House, according to a document outlining EC's rooming procedure. "In practice, the vast majority of freshmen are placed in one of their top 4 halls," the procedure detailed.

In an interview with *The Tech*, EC President Tesla Wells '20 likened the room assignment process to a Pareto Curve, where the y-axis is "communal or net happiness at the expense of a few people having bad experiences," and the x-axis is a "standardized experience where net happiness is not optimized."

"The friction between the administration and students is [about] needing to come somewhere in the middle of the curve," Wells said, "There are a few people who are really, really hurting here, and the administration is trying to advocate for them. Meanwhile, most students are trying to advocate for their overall happy experiences. These two are not mutually exclusive."

"Just because the administration gave these constraints [for the design exercise] does not necessarily mean they are going to follow through on implementing them campus-wide," Wells said. "One of the motivations behind providing these requirements was to give an incentive for student leaders to think outside their comfort zone."

In an email to *The Tech,* Wells wrote that "the solutions that come out of [the design exercise] are going to either be their own best advocates or detractors."

According to Wells, EC residents would like more reasoning behind the design exercise. "It's really difficult to convey administration motivation and intent when you're requiring people to take action, and they are trying to back-extrapolate," Wells said.

Wells believes that the administration is actively listening to what students have to say. "My ideal situation is that students are given at least an equal voice as the administration in the final rooming process, not just that students were consulted."

MacGregor House

First years in MacGregor House are assigned rooms using an algorithm that maximizes happiness and uses mutual selection, though first years' preferences are weighted much more heavily than upper-level students' ratings.

In the evening after FYRE results are released, first years visit each entry for 12 minutes, with a total of about 90 additional minutes to explore their preferred entries out of all nine. Upper-level students rate on a scale from zero to six how much each first-year student is a fit with their entry in the three minutes of travel time between visits.

Cheng said that he thought some of first years' stress about choosing their entry rankings and being placed in a room in an entry was due to the short amount of time they had to become familiar with all the entries, as well as the fact that many upper-level students had not yet returned to the dorm.

"Through mutual selection, we can almost guarantee that all residents will feel comfortable where they live," Eleanor Wintersteen '19, outgoing president of MacGregor, wrote in an email to *The Tech*.

"I think it is possible to have a successful housing process without mutual selection, but I think moving away from mutual selection may result in issues with upperclass student engagement and buy-in," Wintersteen continued.

> **"A lot of the decision-making feels hurried, kind of spontaneous, and there's a tendency to flip-flop."**

"I understand a lot of where the administration is coming from, and most of the motives make sense to me," Cheng said. "The problem is, a lot of the decision-making feels hurried, kind of spontaneous, and there's a tendency to flip-flop or invite the opportunity for discussion and then completely ignore that discussion, or at least appear to ignore that discussion."

Cheng said he thought that in October and November, the administration focused on "we reject rejection"; in December, they changed to focus on increasing diversity; and about two weeks ago, they returned to focus on "we reject rejection." They were concerned that in mutual selection processes, upper-level students would select first years similar to themselves and decrease diversity in living groups, he said.

Maseeh Hall

First years in Maseeh can squat their rooms, and Maseeh does not use mutual selection, so the requirements will not require a new design from Maseeh. The majority of first years squat.

Darius Bopp '20, outgoing president of Maseeh, told *The Tech* in an interview that mutual selection would not be consistent with Maseeh's "be you with us" ideology in which any person should feel welcome on any floor.

> **"I think things are moving, and it's like a strobe light: we see where it's at when the light is on and we don't get to see the moving parts."**

Bopp said Sunday that he had emailed the information about the workshops and email addresses for feedback to Maseeh residents last Thursday, and has gotten zero responses.

"I think things are moving, and it's like a strobe light: we see where it's at when the light is on and we don't get to see the moving parts," Bopp said. "We're getting information as it's changing but we're not seeing the full progression."

McCormick Hall

First-year students in McCormick can enter the post-FYRE lottery as "prospective squatters," meaning they can choose to remain in their current room or move to a different room, or as "movers," meaning they forfeit rights to remain in their current room, according to McCormick's 2017 Code of Rules.

The lottery process, which is based on randomized rankings, already fulfills both requirements of the design exercise.

McCormick's president did not respond to *The Tech*'s requests for comment.

Next House

First years in Next House visit every wing in one to two hours before the randomized lottery. Each wing also hosts an event the day before the lottery, and first years receive booklets with information about the wings.

Next would only implement first-year squatting if it were something residents wanted, Jessica Tang '20, incoming president of Next House, told *The Tech* in an interview.

So far, the residents who have given Next Exec feedback have been mostly opposed to letting first years squat, Justina Yang '19, outgoing president of Next, told *The Tech* in an interview Monday. Yang said that in her opinion, in the long term, letting first years squat might cause Next residents to form communities around going somewhere to spend time with others, rather than around living in the same part of the dorm.

"The uniqueness of every dorm's system is very good," Yang said. "I don't think that many of [the other dorms' systems] would fit into Next very well."

"Next has a dorm-wide culture as well as individual wing cultures," Tang said. "[Next has] some people who care less about which wing they specifically are in, but are involved with the rest of the house, and because of things like that, mutual selection, which focuses a lot on halls or wings would not work for us very well."

New House

New House uses mutual selection. In the numbered houses, first years visit all four houses and fill out a form with their preferences. A house-wide housing chair and housing chairs of each of the numbered houses meet in person to assign first years to rooms. Cultural houses interview incoming first years who rank them in their top five dorms over the summer.

President of New House Emily Tang '19 declined to answer *The Tech*'s questions about her opinions on mutual selection, the potential changes to room assignment processes, and how New House would be affected if the requirements were put in place. Tang wrote that she thought answering the questions "could jeopardise [her] ability to represent New House in the upcoming discussions."

Random Hall

Random first places first years in temporary rooms. On the day FYRE results are released, they are taken on a tour of the dorm while the floors showcase what makes them unique. First years then have about two hours to visit the floors to learn more.

Meanwhile, a random list of first years is generated, which determines in what order the first years choose their floor. Mutual selection is not used.

Squatting is currently prohibited. "We have very few open rooms per floor (often only one or two), so one person choosing to stay in a room for the wrong reasons (doesn't want to move stuff) could really hurt another first-year who wants to live on that floor because they really enjoy the culture or the people there," incoming Random President Amanda Putnam '20 wrote in an email to *The Tech.*

Putnam wrote that she believed a new room assignment system that complies with the two design exercise requirements is possible, but "there would definitely be a cost."

"We would encourage first years to really choose a place that is best for them, even if it requires moving, and perhaps set up a system of upperclassmen who sign up to help move boxes and things," Putnam continued. "But there would still likely be students who squat in their rooms for bad reasons and as a result hurt their fellow first years who genuinely want to live on a floor because they love it."

Simmons Hall

First years in Simmons fill out preference sheets after visiting the various groups within Simmons, according to an online description of their housing policy.

"Using the mindset that the collective happiness of the overall class is much more important than that of any individual freshman, final assignments are left to the discretion of the RACs and the results of the preference sheets," the description said.

Simmons's president and exec members did not respond to *The Tech*'s requests for comment.

Editor's note: Jessica Tang, incoming Next House president, is an arts writer for The Tech.